

RESOLUTION NO. 20190509-019

WHEREAS, in less than a decade, Austin and surrounding communities have experienced a historic number of abrupt and extreme weather events, causing loss of life, total destruction of properties and ecosystems, and displacement of hundreds of people; and

WHEREAS, in 2011, the City of Austin and Central Texas faced record droughts, high temperatures, and devastating wildfires both in Southwest Austin and Bastrop County, which suffered catastrophic damage with two fatalities and the complete loss of thousands of homes and much of the renowned Lost Pines ecosystem; and

WHEREAS, in 2013, historic flooding killed four people in Austin and Travis County, destroyed or severely damaged thousands of homes, forced the evacuation of hundreds of people, and caused the permanent displacement of vulnerable and low-income communities; and

WHEREAS, in 2015, much of Central Texas and Austin again saw devastating floods that killed 14 people, and wrecked homes, bridges, and other infrastructure; rapid rainfall within Austin caused flooding in areas of the city that had never before experienced fast-rising floodwaters; and

WHEREAS, City staff are modifying the City's floodplain maps based on a 2018 National Weather Service study, Atlas 14, which confirms the probability of more flooding events occurring in more areas of the city; and

WHEREAS, local historic weather data showed the summer of 2018 to be the third hottest on record, with 15 consecutive days of triple-digit temperatures; and

WHEREAS, in October 2018, extreme flooding along the Colorado River severely strained the City's water treatment plants, resulting in an unprecedented week-long boil water notice for Austin Water customers; and

WHEREAS, unparalleled weather events continue to attest to the findings of scientific studies, most significantly the 2018 "Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5° C" by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which warned of imminent threats to public health, safety, and the global economy without a worldwide push to reduce global gas emissions by 45 percent in 12 years; and

WHEREAS, in response to the report, nearly 100 U.S. Congressional representatives have signed House Resolution 109, recognizing the duty of the federal government to create a Green New Deal, with cosponsors including Texas U.S. Reps. Lloyd Doggett (Austin), Joaquin Castro (San Antonio), and Veronica Escobar (El Paso); and

WHEREAS, the Green New Deal establishes federal goals that include:

- "achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions;
 - establishing millions of high-wage jobs and ensuring economic security for all;
 - investing in infrastructure and industry;
 - securing clean air and water, climate and community resiliency, healthy food, access to nature, and a sustainable environment for all; and promoting justice and equality;"
- and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin is recognized as an early leader in addressing the threats of climate change by, among other council actions, setting a community-wide goal

of net-zero gas emissions by 2050, setting a sustainability goal of 55% renewable energy by 2025, joining the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, and, most recently, adopting the Water Forward plan to ensure a reliable and resilient water future for the next century; and

WHEREAS, in April 2018, the Sustainability Office released a Climate Resilience Action Plan, which examined the City of Austin's assets and operations to identify vulnerabilities and make recommendations for mitigating the impacts of climate change; and

WHEREAS, the Resilient Dove Springs Community Engagement Initiative, led by Go Austin/Vamos Austin (GAVA) in collaboration with the City of Austin Watershed Protection, Parks and Recreation, Office of Sustainability, and Public Works Department, seeks to optimize resources, increase community resilience, and achieve departmental goals through the creation of a unified community vision for parks, trails, city facilities, creeks, urban agriculture, and flood mitigation that will guide public and private investment and stewardship of the regional green space network in Southeast Austin; and

WHEREAS, the Rockefeller Foundation, in 2013, established 100 Resilient Cities, which helps member cities in the U.S. and abroad retain Chief Resilience Officers and provides the necessary resources to create a resilience plan through such avenues as:

- financial and logistical guidance;
- expert support for the development of a resilience plan
- access to partners from the private, public and non-profit sectors who can assist in the development of a strong and healthy resilience strategy;

- membership into a global network of member cities that learn from and support one another; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Manager is directed to work with the Office of Sustainability to perform a literature review of climate resilience plans of peer cities, to explore available, potential partnerships (such as the 100 Resilient Cities model), and to return to Council no later than August 22, 2019, with recommendations for creating a comprehensive, community-wide climate resilience plan that is fair, just, and equitable.

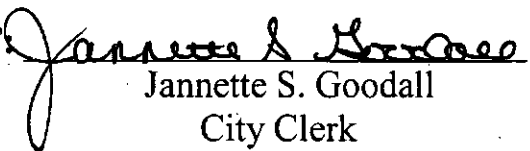
Recommendations should include funding options, such as grants or other revenue sources, to 1) fund a position for a Chief Resilience Officer and staff necessary to produce a resilience plan; or 2) hire a consultant to draft or assist city staff with drafting a comprehensive resilience plan; or 3) other recommendations for achieving this objective.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The Council recognizes we are already experiencing the adverse consequences of climate change, understands the urgency of creating a blueprint to prepare for and respond to the shocks and stressors of catastrophic climate events, and supports the general tenets of the Green New Deal.

ADOPTED: May 9, 2019

ATTEST:


Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk